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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 002972

SIPDIS

MEPI PLEASE PASS TO HANS WECHSEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2014

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KMPI](#) [YM](#) [DEMOCRATIC REFORM](#)

SUBJECT: IS A KHAIWANI RELEASE IMPENDING?

REF: A. SANAA 02498

[B](#). SANAA 02863

[C](#). SANAA 02790

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas Krajewski for reasons 1.4 (b. and d.)

[1](#). (C) Summary. In separate discussions on 11/21 with a member of the as-Shura Council and a close Presidential advisor, Ambassador was told "in strictest confidence" that Saleh has decided to release imprisoned As-Shura opposition newspaper editor-in-chief, Abdulkarim Al-Khaiwani "very soon." End Summary.

Is a release in the offing?

[2](#). (C) On 11/21 a Shura Council member and an advisor to President Saleh told Ambassador that although the conviction of Khaiwani was legal, Saleh intends to release him due to negative international attention and fear that "Yemen's reputation and Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) grade would suffer." Khaiwani has been imprisoned since 9/25 when he was convicted for several violations of the Yemeni Press Law including, "supporting al-Houthi in his rebellion," "publishing reports damaging to the public interests," and "public humiliation of the President" (ref A). Both interlocutors expressed concern over the harm that Khaiwani's case was causing, noting the possible negative effect on Yemen's MCA scorecard. They pointed out that Freedom House's condemnation of the arrest and detention of Khaiwani was particularly alarming to the ROYG.

The straw that broke the camel's back

[3](#). (C) The advisor informed Ambassador that the editor-in-chief was arrested because of a specific comment in one of his newspaper's op-ed pieces that stated "any president who arises from the common people has no legitimacy." Interlocutors furthered that Khaiwani's "royalist, Hashimite leanings" had been tolerated up to that point, but that Saleh considered the "no legitimacy" comment as going too far. (Note: Although post has closely followed articles in Khaiwani's paper, we are unable to find this particular quote in print. End note).

[4](#). (C) Ambassador informed interlocutors that the USG was increasingly concerned about reports of mistreatment and beatings of Khaiwani in prison, (ref B) and that speaking out publicly would have to be the next step (ref C). Both noted that Khaiwani would not be exonerated or pardoned but released on parole.

MOI promises to ease Khaiwani's condition

[5](#). (C) Minister of Interior al-Alimi told Journalists at an iftar dinner on 11/09 that he would follow up on the case, and would assure that Khaiwani's conditions of incarceration would be eased. Nevertheless, two female journalists who disguised themselves as relatives in order to visit him in prison, reported, after Alimi's promise, that Khaiwani's condition continues to deteriorate and that he is in pain from his last beating (ref B). (Note: There is a current ban on journalists visiting Khaiwani. End note).

Comment

[6](#). (C) It is unclear whether the actual comment referred to by these two closely connected officials was indeed the red line that caused Saleh to call for Khaiwani's arrest; it was not cited in the numerous charges against him (ref A). His arrest and continued imprisonment demonstrates that, despite Saleh's promises earlier this year to end imprisonment of journalists, the President has no intention to cease using the justice system against those whom he feels are attacking him. On the positive side, interlocutors expressed concern about MCA funding in particular, indicating that the program does have the ability to affect the thinking of decision

makers. End Comment.
KRAJESKI